Bs Harrison D-4 (1913-1994) 1924 MI Middle East
Bedouin 1934

spacious chafes his spirit and he looks with contempt and pity on the poor creatures that are willing to spend their days in the narrow confines of a town. This pity is for the cultivator and equally for the land-owner and the merchant, who so far worship their bodies that they will swathe them in silk and deck them with gold, a thing permissible for women, but contemptible for a man. The hardest work of the desert Arab is concerned with leading his flocks and with breaking up and repitching camp. As a result, he develops a great distaste for manual labor. He regards it as degrading, and no small amount of his dislike for life in a town rests on that fact. Digging up the ground, patiently caring for plants and crops, and all the work of the agriculturist he looks on as beneath him. Free men were created for something better than that.

It is the impression of a stranger to the country that not a blade of grass or a single date palm could be raised in all Arabia except in the oases where the gardeners work. The Arabs tell us that this is far from the truth. There are many places where water can be found close to the surface and where gardening could be carried on profitably. In connection with the *Ikhwan* movement of puritan Wahabi Mohammedanism that has swept over all inland Arabia in the last few years, one of the efforts of the leaders has been to settle a certain number of the new converts in towns and villages. Altogether some sixty-five new settlements have been started since the inception of the movement. Doubtless most of these are very small, but there are a few of considerable size, and two or three are small cities of perhaps five thousand inhabitants. The Arabs insist that there are many other such places, where communities might spring up

From the desert -- Arabet

St Hardman D-4 (1912-1934) 1924 M1 Middle East Bedouin 04.54

if the Bedouins were willing to settle down to that sort of existence.

But the Bedouin, even though he knows of these places, does not care to give up his free desert life for the hard and disagreeable labor of the towns. He is faithful to his camels, and to his goats and sheep if he is fortunate enough to have them. He loves these animals and not one of them lacks a personal name. The little lambs and kids will be carried in his arms when the road is rocky or steep. The work of a cultivator, however, he hates, and he will nearly starve before descending to such a level as to engage in it. He looks down upon the townsmen with a lofty scorn and thinks of their hard labor as unworthy of men, fit rather for animals. This remarkable man regards himself as heaven's favorite, and he exhibits a contempt for the rest of the world and a satisfaction with himself and his life that would be sublime if they were not terribly pathetic.

Yet far from being ridiculous this Bedouin of the desert is one of the most splendid figures of our time. Out of that fearful poverty which amounts to constant semi-starvation, out of a lack of cleanliness that is continual degradation of the spirit, out of an isolation and an ignorance that make him a provincial in spite of himself, he stands as the world's supreme example of that Liberty, Equality and Fraternity that have been the dream of the ages. Tied down and limited by the lack of all material things, his spirit looks on them with indifference and cheerful contempt and pines away only when immersed in the obese and self-satisfied materialism of the town. He rises triumphant over his environment by the sheer strength of his spirit. Ignorant of all the wis-

Hamlaca D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 MI Middle East
Saud: Arabia M31
Bedouin M34

of a spiritual guide or pastor, much less for the functions of a priest.

There is a small group of land-owners and merchants (the same individual is frequently both), who constitute a wealthy upper class which has great power in the community. They form a sort of unofficial cabinet to advise the ruler, and not a great deal happens without their knowledge and approval. However, they are not sheikhs, and sometimes when a powerful governor presides over a community, this rich men's cabinet exercises surprisingly little influence over him. The ruler and his family form what might be termed a class by themselves. Frequently they are strangers more or less directly derived from some Bedouin tribe and far less traveled and sophisticated than many of their rich subjects. They are, however, none the less effective rulers for that. But the whole subject of the workings of Arab government is one that we must reserve for a later chapter.

Desert and oasis in Arabia represent two conflicting modes of life and there is little sympathy between them. To the Bedouin the town is a community of masters and slaves with the vast majority slaves. The date gardener works long and hard; moreover he works under another man's direction, and this director of his efforts receives the major part of the proceeds. The artisan, to be sure, is not the slave of any one individual, but he too is cooped up in narrow quarters, and the necessities of his family keep him busy from morning till night working with his hands. Land-owners and merchants the Bedouin envies, but he still pities them their cramped life and close confinement in the town. Why any one who is rich enough to afford a home in the desert should prefer to live in the oasis, is to him an insoluble mystery.

A Dickson G-6 (1929-47) 1951 MS I Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

511 what the world would call honest methods. Hence if *he* cannot live on somebody's largesse he must steal or raid. He cannot spin, so work
• [494] he is ashamed. If he is forbidden to raid (as is the case under Ibn Su'ud's regime to-day), the fight for life is a particularly severe one, when he is not provided with an occupation to enable him to earn. Year in, year out, the poorer type of Badawin—and there are many tens of thousands of such—never gets a "square" meal according to our standards. He probably has meat only when he can cadge it off somebody more fortunate than himself, or when his shaikh gives a dinner party.

242 His own food for most of the year consists of only camel's milk and a handful of dates per day. The camel-herd gets even less than this.

291 The Badawin's clothes are on the same scanty scale as his food, a thin cotton *dishdásha* (smock), replaced only when it falls off his back with age, and a threadbare *'abba* (cloak), *kaffiyah* and thin rope *agal* (head cloth and head cord), are all he has to cover his ill-nourished body. Yet all this makes for toughness and hardihood, and the average
[172] Badawin seems made of steel. The lack of warm clothing is probably the hardest thing in life that he has to bear, for in winter the temperature often falls below freezing point, and the winds are of ice, and cut the body through and through. I have never in my life felt so cold as in the desert a hundred miles inland of Kuwait when a *yáki* or *jaloli*
242 574 wind has been blowing in December or January. Yet in spite of the hard life, the Badawin is never in danger of actual starvation or of dying from want. His *ahl* (family) would never permit this, nor would the system of affording three days' hospitality to all and sundry —such a splendid feature of democratic Arabia—allow of a man reaching such straits. A person who is down and out, without a penny to his name, would in reality be far worse off in London than in Arabia, where he could always hope to find a black tent or two to sponge on.

[91] A Badawin's dream and ambition in life is to possess about a dozen
231 camels, next a wife, and afterwards a mare, half a hundred sheep and a *sakkáf*—I am, of course, assuming that he starts with a rifle and a *dhalúl* (riding camel). Give the desert man these essentials and he is a made man, for both camels and sheep double themselves in three years. Any male lambs that are born, he kills for food, the females he

15: Thesiger T-3 (ca. 1949) 1950 MJI Saudi Arabia
Bedouin: MJ4

in ever-increasing numbers from as far away as Najran and Dhofar. They go there at present with the intention of collecting enough money to buy a camel or two, so that they can build up a new herd, or perhaps marry, when they return to their homelands, but I think that every year an increasing number will settle down more or less permanently round the oilfields.

In the desert the Badu need very little to keep themselves alive. Their herds provide them with milk, butter, and occasionally with meat, but they have certain requirements which they cannot supply for themselves. They need cloth and cooking pots, knives, ammunition, an occasional load of dates or grain, and such simple luxuries as a handful of coffee or a little tobacco. To get these things they visit the villages or towns and sell a goat, a little butter, water skins, rugs, and ropes. Life in the desert ceases, however, to be physically possible if the few but entirely essential commodities that the desert Arab has hitherto been able to buy in exchange for the products of the desert become too expensive for him to afford, but the rise in the standard of living along the Persian Gulf is bound to send up the price of food and clothing, and the slightest rise is now fatal to the desert economy. For the Badu have already lost several important resources. In the past, desert transport was in their hands, but now lorries have largely replaced camels. There was also a constant demand in the towns and villages for good riding camels, which were hired by the nomads, and sheikhs would pay big prices for the best breeds. Now most of the villagers and townsmen drive about in cars. Two years ago, when I and my companions rode from Sulayil to Laila along the motor road, the villagers asked us why we did not go in cars "like the Muslamin." A Badu often loses all or nearly all his animals from disease, but where the tribes are still unadministered he can borrow a mount and join a raiding party and perhaps repair his fortunes. In unadministered areas they can also levy a certain amount of blackmail off the villagers, and the village sheikhs are prepared to keep on good terms with the tribes by giving them presents and much hospitality. Badu, however, meet with little sympathy from modern and progressive Arab administrators, who regard them as representing an outlook and way of life which they are anxious to abolish.

The Badu love money; even to handle it seems to give them a thrill, and I have often thought that when they are talking in their sleep they must be counting piles of dollars. Yet I have never had a single dollar stolen on my journeys, though my money has always been carried in unsealed bags distributed at random among the saddle-bags of my companions. The Badu are always obsessed with tales of buried treasure. There is *khaksi* (gold) to be found here and *khaksi* to be found there, under sand dunes, rocks, or even in the middle of quicksands. So naturally the oilfields draw them like a magnet from all over Arabia, and, once there, they find that they can get money for sitting in the shade and guarding something, or for doing work which is certainly easier than watering thirsty camels on a nearly dry well in the middle of summer. There is plenty of good food, abundant sweet water, and long hours for sleep. They have seldom had these things before, and now they are losing

34 Theolgn T-4 (1944-47)249 MD Smith Archiv
Bedouin MSS

camels to draw up the water, but the southern Beda always lift it by hand. They lower a leather bucket, holding about four gallons, to either end of the rope which runs over the pulley, so that as one bucket is drawn up full the other descends empty. Men and women draw together on the well-ropes, four or five to each rope, singing in chorus as they work. We had not been here long before the camel herds arrived and the serious work of watering began. Great leather troughs supported on crossed wooden bongs were set up by each family around the well. Soon there was no room for more watering parties, and latecomers had to wait their turn. The buckets rose and fell and were tipped into the troughs above which the skinny camels pushed and thrust while their calves frolicked around. Shouting herdsboys, stripped to the waist, ran in and out among them, driving away camels which did not belong to them, and recognizing the many importunate of their own. Others scrambled the kind-sparrows of their favourite beasts, while they sang them their worrying songs to induce them to drink deep. When they had drunk they were couched nearby, to be watered again later in the day, before being driven back to pasturage. Round the well-mouth women filled their water-skins, which they lay swollen and quivering upon the ground, guarded from the trampling feet of the camels by dark-veiled little girls, clad only in a leather fringe around their waists. Five of the women were veiled and all joined freely in the common jests and laughter. Among them was a tall girl of startling beauty. She had come down to the well early in the day, carrying a water-skin and accompanied by her young sister. The centre of a happy laughing group of lads, she dallied here till the evening.

A family of Ba'ar from all the mountains were camped under an overhanging cliff nearby, and they both us into their tent and drink coffee. Kinsmen of the Bin Ma'wiyal, they are different from them in their dress and way of life. They wore bandages round their heads and wraps around their shoulders, as in the Sudan among the Southern Beda, whereas the Bin Ma'wiyal wore plaid like the Northern Arabs in long white shirts whose gathered sleeves fell nearly to the ground. They were returning to their homes in Kashgar al Ba'ar, a two days' journey to the south. Plantations of sorghum and beans are grown there in a shallow valley, guarded by numerous stone-built forts and watch-towers, which look out across the desert over rocky plateaux. Ba'ar is seldom visited by other Arabs, for it is the very stronghold of the Ba'ar, who have an evil reputation for